

Advaita Forum

**General Category => An Introduction to
Vedanta => Topic started by: Dr.
Sadananda on February 17, 2010,
11:51:53 PM**

Title: **Brahman and the world**

Post by: **Dr. Sadananda** on **February 17, 2010, 11:51:53
PM**

Brahman and the world

In proclaiming that 'consciousness is Brahman', as an aphoristic¹ statement, **Vedanta essentially provides a fundamental definition for Brahman.** Brahman being infinite, it cannot be defined since whatever can be defined becomes an object, and thus limited by other objects. Object is different from the subject and that which is objectified can only

¹ Aphorisms- A short pithy instructive saying

be an inert entity, jadam. The definition provided by Vedanta is therefore not meant for objectification, since it is the very consciousness that cannot be objectified. **Then what is the meaning of this so called aphoristic statement 'consciousness is Brahman', if one cannot objectify or even meditate on it?**

Careful analysis indicates that it is a pointer to arrive at the knowledge of Brahman by negating all that which is inert as not Brahman. All that which can be objectified is 'this' - and 'this' is not Brahman. One cannot say 'this is consciousness' or 'this is Brahman', since the very statement makes it an inert entity, which is not Brahman. This is the reason why science cannot objectively study consciousness, as some of scientists are attempting to do, since the very study makes it an object and thus different from 'consciousness'.

We have discussed the fact that the existence of an inert object or even the world cannot be established without a conscious entity being aware of it. That is, inert should be within consciousness, for one to be conscious of the inert. The statement is similar to the one that an object should be flooded by light in order for one to see it. Hence, the inert has to be

pervaded by consciousness or within consciousness, if one is to be conscious of the inert. If one is aware of the world, which is infinite, then the consciousness because of which one is aware of the world should be infinite too.

Q: I do not understand this concocted² logic. You say the world is infinite on one hand and on the other hand, you say consciousness is infinite. In addition consciousness should pervade the inert, if one is to be conscious of the inert. **How can you have two infinite entities diagonally opposite to each other and one pervading the other?** In addition, you have also not explained **how Brahman, who is of the nature of infinite consciousness, can be the cause of an inert universe.** All you have established so far is that an inert entity cannot exist independent of consciousness. You have also mentioned that **Brahman cannot be the creator either, since creation is an action and the infinite cannot act. At the same time Brahman is supposed to be the both the material and intelligent cause for the universe.** What exactly is the relation between consciousness, Brahman, and the Universe which is inert?

A: OK. You caught me. Please follow me closely. Let us go step

² Devise or invent

by step and everything should ultimately fit in. First, we will use a rational analysis and then the scriptural analysis.

Knowledge of an object

We now know that without consciousness, the existence of the world cannot be established. The world has two components – one is the finite objects and the other is the subtler one, space, which is infinite. There is also a third one that is part of the universe which arises with the interaction of Universe with the mind – the time concept. Understanding the Universe therefore involves not only understanding the objects, but also Space and time. Einstein showed that both space and time are relative or essentially related. Movement in space creates time and movement in time creates space. Space and time somehow are interlinked with the mind. Let us analyze these slowly.

Object – Does it really exist?

Existence of the object is intimately related to the knowledge of the object. I cannot talk about the existence of any object without knowledge of its existence, if not physically at least conceptually. Therefore – object is – (is-ness is associated

with its existence) means knowledge of the existence in terms of "the object is". Let us illustrate this with an example. Let me ask you, "Can you bring the "gaa gaa buu buu" that you have in your room?" "What the hell is this "gaa gaa buu buu" that I have in my room? What is that weird stuff, gaa gaa buu bu, anyway, and what is it doing in my room?" "Well, I do not know what it is or what it does either, but I heard that you have it in your room. Can you bring it?" - "You are crazy, you are asking me to bring something neither you nor I know what it is." This crazy conversation is just to point out that we cannot talk of the existence of an object, without the knowledge its existence. Hence "world is" or "the world exists" means I or some conscious entity has the knowledge of its existence. Thus, knowledge and existence of an object go together. They, in fact, are essentially the "chit" and "sat" aspects of Brahman.

What is knowledge?

Interestingly, "knowledge" cannot be defined. All I can talk about is "knowledge of" - of this or that, which is nothing but knowledge of objects. For example, knowledge of

Chemistry, knowledge of Physics, knowledge of Vedanta, and knowledge of the World. All that is informative knowledge. He is very knowledgeable means he has lot of information stored in his memory. Can I define knowledge devoid of any objects? Knowledge devoid of objects cannot be defined! Knowledge devoid of objects is nothing but the knowledge of the "subject", I, which cannot be defined. Why can "I" not be defined? Because, any definition is objectification, and "I am" is the subject that cannot be objectified. At the most one can define "I" only by means of a negative statement; "I" is that, which is not subject to objectification.

Q: Oh! This is all intellectual. I am interested only in Self-realization, not in this mind-boggling logic.

A: Existence of I and therefore knowledge of I is neither intellectual nor non-intellectual "it is factual knowledge. That I am a man is not intellectual understanding "it is a factual understanding. And it is not by accident that it is the same definition that we can give to Brahman. Therefore pure knowledge devoid of any object is the "consciousness" that I am. I am conscious of all the objects that I know. I am also

self-conscious, as we discussed before, which is not a
“knowledge of” but pure knowledge. In other words that is
my very nature or svarUpa lakShaNa of myself “ which
Vedanta calls as “chit” svarUpam. I am the nature of
consciousness. This statement should not be a statement of
thought at the intellect level but clear understanding that I am
conscious entity because of which I am even conscious of this
statement of thought.

[Powered by SMF 1.1.11](#) | [SMF © 2006-2009, Simple Machines LLC](#)

Advaita Forum

**General Category => Critical analysis of
vedAnta paribhAShA => Topic started by:**

Dr. Sadananda on February 17, 2010,

09:59:28 PM

Title: **Creation as Transformation**

Post by: **Dr. Sadananda** on **February 17, 2010, 09:59:28**

PM

Creation as Transformation

vedAnta says that Brahman is one without a second: ekam, eva, advitlyam – ‘one, alone, without a second’ and Shankara comments on the use of these three separate words (ekam, eva and advitlyam) to negate differences of any kind. Three kinds of differences can exist: vijAti, sajAti and svagata bheda-s; and hence Shankara says that three separate words are used by the scripture to negate each of these three types of differences.

- 1) Differences of genus (e.g. trees are different from stones) is called vijAti bheda.
- 2) Differences within the same genus or family (e.g. a mango tree is different from a coconut tree) is called sajAti bheda.
- 3) Differences within a unit or vyakti (e.g. within a tree, the roots, branches, leaves, fruits, etc are different) are called svagata bheda-s.

The differences exist because all objects are made up of parts. In Brahman, since it is one without a second, there is nothing else to differentiate it from. Hence, the scriptures call Brahman 'agotram', meaning that it does not belong to any family or genus since it is one without a second. It is an undifferentiated homogeneous mass of consciousness - **praj~nAnaM brahma**.

We have discussed before that this is a svarUpa lakShaNa of Brahman, implying that consciousness is Brahman and Brahman is consciousness. **Since consciousness has to exist**, Brahman is also defined as pure existence. Being one without a second, Brahman has to be limitless or anantam which also means that it is of the nature of pure Ananda svarUpa. The implication of all this is that there cannot be anything other than Brahman, and therefore there cannot be anything other than pure, undifferentiated, infinite existence-consciousness.

The question then arises as to how we can explain the universe of things and beings, apparently consisting of many conscious and inert entities. Brahman, a conscious entity without a second, appears to transform itself into many things and beings. As the Shruti says: bahusyAm, prajAyeya - let me become many and it became many. How does one

become many? Here, two prominent theories exist - one is pariNAMA vAda and the other is vivarta vAda. VP discusses the difference between the two. Advaita subscribes to vivarta vAda.

pariNAMA involves complete transformation of one thing into another, like milk becoming yogurt or curds. In science, we call this 'irreversible transformation'. In this transformation of one thing into another, the cause is destroyed in the formation of the product. VP says that, in this kind of transformation (pariNAMA), both cause and effects are ontologically equivalent - pariNAma nAma upAdAna samasattAkakAryApattiH; the material cause, upAdAna kAraNa, has the same ontological existence as the product. Another example of pariNAMA is when a ring is changed into a bangle. Both ring and bangle have the same degree of reality. vishiShTAdvaita, following sAMkhya, subscribes to this type of transformation for creation. In doing so, one gives the product the same degree of reality as the material cause. Hence jlva and jagat become as real as Brahman from which they are formed, just as the yogurt or curd is formed from milk.

In contrast, **vivarta** involves a transformation of the cause into

products without the cause getting destroyed during the transformation. Hence, it is called an 'apparent' transformation. The scriptures give three examples to illustrate this transformation: clay becoming many types of clay-vessels; gold becoming many golden ornaments; iron becoming many iron-tools (Ch. Up 6-1-3). In all these cases of **vivarta transformation**, the material cause pervades the effects without itself undergoing any transformation.

Hence VP says: vivarto nAma

upAdAnaviShamasattAkakAryApattiH - in the production of a product, the upAdAna kAraNa or material cause has different degree of reality or existence from the product. That is, ontologically, the cause and the effects are different. In the case of the formation of a ring from gold, the gold remains as gold and the ring is produced by this **vivarta** or 'transformation-less' transformation. Is the product gold or a ring? We normally refer to it as a golden ring. But that is a misnomer³, as we are giving more importance to the name and form than to the substantive. It should rightly be called 'ringly gold', i.e. it is gold with the quality of being in the form of a ring. Although the word 'ring' is a noun, it has no substantive of its own. I.e. ring cannot exist independent of gold whereas gold

³ An incorrect or unsuitable name

can exist independently of a ring.

These distinctions are expressed by the **anvaya-vyatireka**⁴ (co-existence and co-absence) logic in tarka shAstra. This logic is used to establish the relation between two entities that exist together, and clarify whether they are interdependent or independent of each other, i.e. their ontological status with respect to each other. **anvaya** implies 'one is, the other is', i.e. **both exist simultaneously**. Taking the example of the ring: 'ring is, gold is' implying that, wherever a ring is present, then gold has to be there also. Without gold being present, the ring cannot be there. At this stage we do not know which is independent and which is dependent. Now we apply **vyatireka**. vyatireka **involves their absence**: 'ring is not, gold is'. This means that, even if the ring is destroyed by melting, the gold still remains. This proves that the gold has the independent existence. The transformation of gold into a ring is of the 'vivarta' type. VP says that the material cause and the product have different degrees of existence. One is 'more real' than the other.

Now let us apply this anvaya-vyatireka logic to the milk and yogurt example. Applying anvaya: 'milk is, yogurt is not'. And

vyatireka says: 'milk is not, yogurt is'. Thus they both are independent of each other. In the language of VP they have the same degree of existence or reality. That is the nature of pariNAma.

Returning to the vivarta transformation, in respect of the ring and gold example, the existence of the ring is of lower reality since the ring can be negated without negating the gold by changing the ring into a bangle. The gold remains as gold while the ring can be changed from one form/name into another. With reference to the gold, this transformation is vivarta, but with reference to the ring transforming into a bangle, it is pariNAma.

According to advaita vedAnta, all objects in the universe are only relatively real - vyavahAra satyam. Absolute reality remains with Brahman, as it is one without a second and part-less. Also it remains as Brahman without undergoing any transformation during the creation of the universe, since it is infinite. What is infinite cannot undergo any transformation. Just as gold appear to transform into ornaments without itself undergoing any transformation, **Brahman transforms** into space-air-fire-water-earth as per the Vedantic declarative statement 'let me become many and he became many'.

Because of vivarta, or transformation-less

transformation, Brahman remains as Brahman, while there are varieties of products as a result of combinations and permutations. **Brahman expresses as 'existence' in everything, and as 'consciousness' and 'happiness' also in subtle products**, depending on the subtleness or the purity of the objects.

Just as in the metaphor of 'ringly gold', the substantive of every object is Brahman only. Hence the famous Gita shloka: brahmArpaNam brahma haviH - everything is nothing but Brahman; and neha nAnAsti kincana - there is nothing other than Brahman.

[Powered by SMF 1.1.11](#) | [SMF © 2006-2009, Simple Machines LLC](#)

— *Anvaya* — अन्वय — positive; affirmative; nexus —

4

Anvaya-vyatireka — अन्वयव्यतिरेक — positive and negative concomitance

1. A type of inference based upon the invariable concomitance of agreement in presence and agreement in absence. In this type of inference, the reason (*hetu*) is both copresent and coabsent with the major term (*sādhya*); e.g., smoke is both positively and negatively concomitant with fire. In a hearth, smoke is copresent with fire and, in a lake, smoke is coabsent with fire. (See *anumāna*.)

